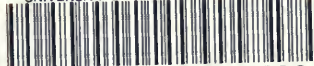


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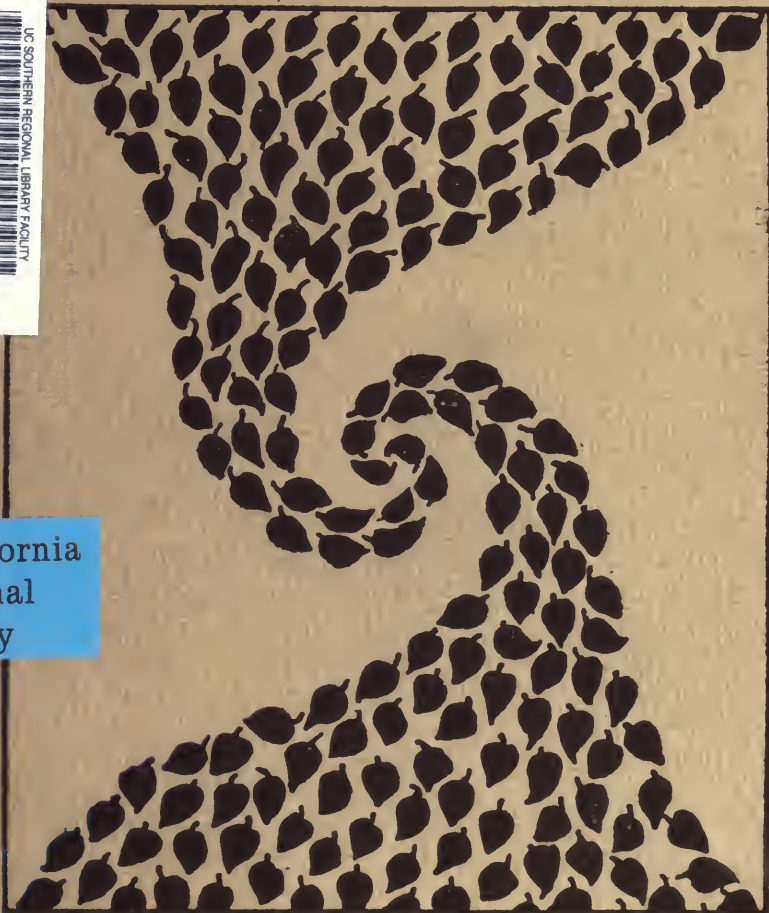
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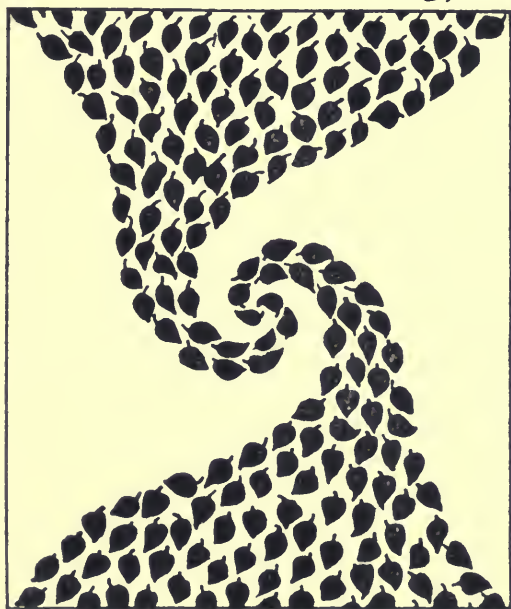
LEAVES IN THE ROAD



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# LEAVES IN THE ROAD

Eric.R.D.Maclagan



Howard Wilford Bell

E.M. London

1901





TO  
R. E. R.

OXFORD  
1901.



ET JE M'EN VAIS  
AU VENT MAUVAIS  
QUI M'EMPORTE  
DEÇÀ, DELÀ,  
PAREIL À LA  
FEUILLE MORTE.

VERLAINE



## A COMPLAINT CONCERNING FIVE CHAINS

I have tasted the splendour of things forgotten,  
I have dipped my lips in a wonderful wine,  
Though the roses that scent it are sere and rotten  
The passionate red of their hearts is mine ;  
And you bid me turn from the Prince's Palace,  
As the pale-eyed dawn through the curtain peers,  
To the bitter draught of a meagre chalice,  
A wine that is mixed with the water of tears.

I have pressed my fingers on bowls of amber  
Where the vapours of cedar and sandal rise,  
Where the hot lithe trails of the red rose clamber  
From neck to brow and from brow to eyes ;

From the smooth floor scattered with scarlet petals,  
You would have me kneel on a pavement bare,  
Where the biting fume of your incense settles  
In cold gray coils on the cloistered air.

I have clad me about in silken raiment  
Inwrought with gold as a flame of fire,  
That came from the East with a life for payment  
By a merchant that journeyed in ships of Tyre :  
And how should I cast it aside with loathing  
And follow humbly with ankles bare,  
And set on my body for delicate clothing  
The girdle of cord and the cloth of hair ?

I have heard as I threaded the turning mazes  
That pass and pass till the day begins,  
The sweet shrill lips that have sung my praises,  
The voice of the flutes and the violins :  
Must I too stand at your sombre altar  
And listen low in the chapels dim  
To the heavy tide of your chaunted psalter,  
The sobbing wail of your lenten hymn ?

I have seen in silent and sidelong glances,  
Till soul and sense hung nigh on my lips,  
White limbs that twined in the clinging dances  
And bodies swayed to the finger tips,  
Bright hair that burned as a taper burning,  
Red lips that shone as a round rose shines ;  
And must my eyes follow the slow priest turning,  
The dark choir bowed in their kneeling lines ?

Ah, Christ ! Thou seest the bonds that bind me,  
The five strong chains of my senses five,  
That gather and coil and cling behind me,  
That I may not sever, though sore I strive.  
Faint blossom at even thy five Red Roses,—  
And I loathe my bonds, and I love them well,—  
And ever about me the darkness closes . . .  
Deliver my soul from the Gates of Hell !

## THREE TRIOLETS

### I

None can cleave asunder  
    This my love from me,  
Men may gaze and wonder,  
None can cleave asunder ;  
Nay, with all the thunder  
    Of the severing sea,  
None can cleave asunder  
    This my love from me.



Stars must hide their faces  
At the dawn of day ;  
As in heavenly places  
Stars must hide their faces,  
So her memory chases  
Other dreams away ;  
Stars must hide their faces  
At the dawn of day.

Dare ye match her glory,  
Ye that loved of old ?  
Stars of song and story,  
Dare ye match her glory ;  
Ladies of Malory,  
Guenevere, Isold,  
Dare ye match her glory,  
Ye that loved of old ?

## THE GHOSTLY HUNTERS

The dead man lay upon the bed  
    With candles four and four,  
But the soul crouched whimpering by his head  
    And feared the open door.

Out of his hole the gray rat ran,  
    Out of his hole the mouse,  
Because the soul of the dead man  
    Was tarrying in the house.

The soul fled out into the wind  
    Before the midnight bell,  
And ever flying heard behind  
    The ghostly Hunters yell.

The Hunters drive with hounds of flame  
The fleeting souls of men,  
By the Heavenly gates and the door of Shame  
To Middle earth again.

They ran beneath the dripping caves,  
Beyond the drifting sky,  
And above a roaring as of waves  
Rose shrill the windy cry;

They swept across the misty plain  
In ever nearing chase,  
And the weary soul dropped down again  
To seek a hiding place.

A little hour before the morn  
The mother lay abed ;  
The sun rose and the child was born  
And the ghostly Hunters fled.

## A CHANCE

As two pale shells, two twines  
Of the sea's fruitless vines,  
Are flung together in the surges' thunder,  
To nestle, each by each,  
Safe on the sheltering beach  
Till the next wave shall tear them far asunder ;

Even so, Belovèd, we,  
Caught in 'Time's restless sea,  
And joined at hazard of the sharp wave's spurning,  
One moment may abide  
And then are dashed aside  
To wait, and watch, and pray our wave's returning.

No wish of ours may stay  
Or speed it on its way,  
Stirred by the pulse of some far **ocean** weather ;  
**This pray we** ; in that hour  
May its resistless power  
Spare us or slay, but spare or slay together.

## MONT SAINT MICHEL. 1899

Here in the marvellous Isle am I  
Kneeling awhile by the barren choir,  
And thou in the empty air on high  
Burnest all gold at the topmost spire ;  
Lord of the land and the splendid sea,  
Glorious Michael, fight for me.

Under the sweep of the sheer sea wall  
The white foam rushes to touch the land,  
And over the rock the surges fall  
And seethe, and sever, and flood the sand ;  
Lord of the Isle and the roaring sea,  
Pitiful Michael, stand for me.

The moon slides out and the clouds pass by  
And the golden armour to silver turns,  
But ever above where the sea-mews fly  
The Wonderful Guardian stands and burns ;  
Lord of the sky and the shining sea,  
Merciful Michael, pray for me.



## THE FAR COUNTRY

Thou wast a lady sweet to see  
With tender eyes and wealth of hair,  
Now thou art gone to the Far Country  
And never a one shall name thee fair.

Kings' sons were suitors unto thee,  
Thou shouldst have been a royal bride,  
Now thou art gone to the Far Country  
And shapeless things are by thy side.

Great scorn hadst thou of such as we  
And little heed of how we sped,  
Now thou art gone to the Far Country  
And beggars are above thy head.

## THE IDOL

I dreamed I was an Idol, and I sat  
Still as a crystal, smiling as a cat,  
Where silent priests through immemorial hours  
Wove for my head mysterious scarlet flowers.

Far down, the dusty daylight stabbed the air  
And kindled into gold the painted hair  
Of those imperious impotent images  
That brooded in the perfumed silences.

There, as I waited, day by changeless day,  
My people brought their gifts and knelt to pray,  
And I alone, of all that dwelt apart,  
Had pity on my people in my heart ;

Had pity on the sad that mourned their dead,  
Had pity on the poor that cried for bread,  
Had pity most on boy and girl that came  
And prayed for love, and loving blest my name ;

But in my unavailing pity sat  
Still as a crystal, smiling as a cat.

TO A BOY, WITH "THE  
ADVENTURES OF ODYSSEUS"  
(FOR R. B. M.)

I send you, for a little time,  
Faint echoes of a lordlier rhyme,  
Half told in words that cannot speak  
The rolling glory of the Greek ;  
But you shall hear yourself, ere long,  
The minstrel's tale, the Siren's song,  
And catch from Homer's ringing lips  
The thunder of the meeting ships.  
Then, when in some forgotten nook  
You find, one day, this dusty book,  
Think, for one moment thanking me,  
" Here first I read the Odyssey."

## SPONSA MORTIS

Make close the eastern windows  
for the dying night  
Without grows pale ; but here  
upon their altars, light  
Many a tawny taper  
in pure sacrifice  
To gaze upon my marriage  
with compassionate eyes.  
Lift from my weary body  
all her pomp of gems,  
The weight of necklaces  
and awful anadems,  
Ere the sad sapphires kindle  
into alien blue ;

And clothe me in the clean  
virginal white anew,  
That thrills my aching limbs  
with sudden cool embrace ;  
But first, above the heavy  
hair that crowns my face,  
Bind fast a linen veil  
to hold my ears unmoved  
By all the clamour of  
the waters I have loved.

So, being clad devoutly,  
with unhurrying feet,  
Across the threshold I  
go forth at last to meet,  
After his courtship of  
innumerable days,  
A more tremendous bridegroom  
than your lips can praise.

## THE HOST OF AIR

O vast implacable host of air,  
Will you not give us a little rest  
From the crying of passion and despair,  
And treading of feet on an old stair,  
And laughter, and beating of the breast?

Your windy banners shall not be furled,  
Nor your fires die under the hill,  
Nor your shrill spears cease to be hurled  
Until in the final flame the world  
Is burnt into crystal, and is still.

## ABSENCE

Here in the room, where all things keep  
    Their lingering memories of you,  
    I sit and hunger all day through  
For night that brings me dreams and sleep.

The curtain, faint with tarnished gold,  
    And blossoms in whose silk there clings  
    A perfume of forgotten things,  
Hangs idly swaying, fold by fold ;

The glimmering mirror seems to wait  
    For you to cloud it with your breath  
    In gazing ; and the rose beneath  
For lack of you is desolate,



The rose that, sickening in the sun,  
Droops wearily out of the tall  
Venetian chalice, letting fall  
Her scented petals, one by one.

## THE INTRUDER

I thought to live in solitude apart,  
A watcher in the sea-girt tower,  
While in the untrodden roadways of my heart  
I heard the grass grow, hour by hour.

I dwelt remote from laughter and from sighs,  
These many days, until you came  
With your insatiable indifferent eyes  
Blue as the blue heart of a flame.

Now all the day there thunders in my ears  
The tumult of the circling sea,  
And, fed with frankincense of hopes and fears,  
The flame consumes my heart and me.

## HYMN TO APHRODITE

AFTER SAPPHO

Immortal Goddess of the Broidered Chair,  
Wile-weaving Child of Zeus, my prayer receive ;  
No more, dread Queen, with anguish and despair  
My spirit grieve.

But hither speed and hearken, if afar  
Thou e'er hast heard my pleading voice of old,  
And left behind thee in thy yokèd car  
The halls of gold,

Thy father's house ; the sparrows fleet and fair  
That bore thee swiftly round the black world's girth  
Smote with their multitudinous wings the air  
'Twixt heaven and earth ;

Sudden they came ; but thou, my Lady blest,  
With strange sweet smile upon thy deathless face,  
Didst ask me why, with what new care oppress,  
I sought thy grace ;

Didst bid me tell thee for what beauty new,  
What new desire my passionate soul might long.  
“ Whom shall I draw to love thee, Psappha ? who  
Hath done thee wrong ?

For though she fly thee, she shall yet pursue,  
Yea, though she shun thy gifts, she yet shall give,  
Yea, though she love not, she shall love thee too,  
Though sore she strive.”

Then come, I pray thee, come, to rid me now  
From my sad care ; then, whatsoe'er my heart  
Would see fulfilled, fulfil it ; and do thou  
Take up my part.

## TEARS

### AFTER PALLADAS

Once among tears I was born, and now after  
tears I am dead,

And all through the life I lived, many the tears  
that I shed ;

Out on Man for a tearful feeble pitiful race  
That is dragged underground at last, and  
moulders away apace.

## PRESENTS

### AFTER VILLIERS DE L'ISLE ADAM

If you should ask, some even-time,  
The secret of my soul's distress,  
I'll speak to you an ancient rhyme  
To touch your loneliness.

If you should tell of griefs you bore,  
Of hopes that never smiled on you,  
I'll go and pluck you nothing more  
Than roses, brimmed with dew.

If, like the blossom of the dead  
Apart amid the tombs it loves,  
You long to share the tears I shed,  
Then I will give you doves.

## AFTER PAUL VERLAINE

(LA BONNE CHANSON, XX.)

In dolorous uncertainty

I wandered by the treacherous way ;  
Thy hands, Belovèd, guided me.

So faint, so pale, so far away

The feeble hope of morning shone ;  
You looked at me, and it was day.

Save for his echoing steps alone

No sound the traveller's heart might cheer ;  
It was your voice said, " Follow on."

My heart, in darkness and in fear,

Wept on its way for lone distress ;  
But Love, our delicate conqueror, dear,  
Has made us one in happiness.

## APPARITION

AFTER STÉPHANE MALLARMÉ

The moon grew very sad ;  
the weeping seraphim  
Dreamed, with their bows in hand,  
amid the calm of dim  
Vaporous blossoms, and  
from dying violets drew  
Pale sobs, that floated o'er  
the flowers crowned with blue.  
It was that hallowed day  
you first bestowed your kiss ;  
My dreaming mind, desirous  
to torment my bliss,  
Drank, in her wisdom, deeply  
of Grief's sweet perfume  
That leaves, without regret  
and without after-gloom,



Unto the heart that plucks  
    a Vision's harvesting.  
Eyes bent on age-worn pavement  
    I was wandering,  
When in the evening time,  
    with sunlight in your hair,  
You in my path appeared  
    to me, stood smiling there . . .  
I thought I saw the fairy  
    with the Cap o' Light  
Who once, in my spoilt childhood,  
    through sweet dreams of night  
Passed, ever 'twixt her fingers'  
    loosely fastened bars,  
Scattering snowy clusters  
    of white perfumed stars.

## LEAVES IN THE ROAD

Last year, when we were glad together,  
We wondered, you and I,  
At the leaves drifting in the road  
And the clouds in the sky ;

Now, in the same gray autumn weather,  
We are so far apart,  
And the leaves drifting in the road  
Put the grief in my heart.



Chiswick Press: Charles Whittingham and Co.  
Tooks Court, Chancery Lane, London.





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